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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/PPD, EUR/CARC

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [AM](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#)

SUBJECT: ARMENIA: GOOD COVERAGE OF PRESIDENT BUSH'S SPEECH AND CHARGE'S COMMENTS

REF: YEREVAN 0045

(U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

SUMMARY

¶11. (SBU) In addition to engaging with senior GOAM leaders (reftel), on January 11 the Charge d'Affaires held an interview on the President's new strategy in Iraq with three major Armenian media outlets we invited to participate--Armenian Public TV (Armenia's national television station), Kentron TV (a private television station), and Armenia Liberty (RFE/RL's Armenian service). The two television stations aired clips of the interview, as well as footage of the President's speech on their evening news program. Armenia Liberty published an article on its website entitled, "U.S. Expects Continued Armenian Troop Presence in Iraq." In addition, most television stations aired quotes from the President's speech without commenting. Three newspapers published stories on the speech, two of which commented negatively on the new strategy. We will continue to seek media opportunities to explain and support the U.S. strategy in Iraq. End Summary.

CHARGE GETS PRESS ON IRAQ

¶12. (U) The two television stations present at the interview with the Charge aired clips of the interview, as well as parts of the President's speech, during their evening news segments. Public TV aired the Charge's statement that, "President Bush acknowledged that the situation in Iraq is unacceptable. Our troops in Iraq have fought bravely, and have benefited from the support of coalition partners, like Armenia." Public TV also aired the Charge's response to a question about Armenian troop levels in Iraq during which he said the United States would welcome additional troops from Armenia. Kentron TV quoted the Charge as saying, "[I]t was clear that we needed to change our strategy in Iraq. So President Bush, together with his national security team, conducted a comprehensive review. ...In the discussions, everyone agreed that there is no magic formula for success in Iraq. And one message came through loud and clear: Failure in Iraq would be a disaster for the United States, for our coalition partners, and for the entire region." The news anchor also noted that the Charge said that the United States greatly appreciated Armenia's peacekeeping forces in Iraq and expressed hope that Armenia would continue to participate in the coalition.

¶13. (U) Armenia Liberty's article on the interview focuses on the Charge's statement that the United States expects Armenia to maintain its military presence in Iraq and his praise for the Armenian parliament's recent decision to extend the mandate of the Armenian troops stationed there. The article also refers to the Charge's responses to a question about whether the United States is

providing assistance to the peacekeepers, and whether the United States would like Armenia to send troops to Afghanistan. The article states, "In Godfrey's words, the U.S. will specifically carry on with its 'very significant' assistance to a special peacekeeping battalion of the Armenian Armed Forces that provides personnel for Yerevan's ongoing missions in Iraq and Kosovo....[G]odfrey indicated that this could pave the way for Armenian involvement in other conflict zones such as Afghanistan."

OTHER MEDIA OUTLETS COVER THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

¶4. (U) In addition to the three media outlets invited to the interview, the majority of television stations aired clips of the President's speech without providing commentary. Print publications covered the speech less broadly, with three newspapers publishing articles. Hayastani Hanrapetutiu, the government-run newspaper, published an article entitled, "The Danger of the Vietnamization of Iraq." The author compares the strategy to increase U.S. forces in Iraq with the increase of forces in Vietnam, and says that American politicians are also concerned about the situation. A second article in the daily, which focuses on summarizing the new strategy, leads by saying that President Bush "took full responsibility for the mistakes in Iraq." Iravunk, an opposition newspaper known for its sharp commentaries, published an article entitled, "Foreign Games in the Armenian Political Field." The article says, "The fact that 2007 would be heated was obvious before the celebration of the new year when Saddam Hussein was flamboyantly subjected to capital punishment and George Bush 'made Americans happy' by sending an additional 20,000 troops to Iraq. In other words, Washington will lead a more aggressive policy in our region, trying to create tension with Iran and establish America as the superpower in

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Armenia."

COMMENT

¶5. (SBU) The two newspapers' negative articles about the strategy reveal that, while Armenia is a member of the international coalition in Iraq, the entire country is not necessarily on board with the U.S. strategy there. The Charge's interview helped get out the U.S. view of the new strategy and was an important way to thank Armenia for its contribution to the global fight against terrorism. We will continue to seek out ways such as this to get our message on Iraq out to the Armenian public.

GODFREY